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ABSTRACT

The Neighborhood Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 3320) was ordered to be reported by the House Committee on Education and Labor on October 17, 1991. This report provides an introduction to the "systemic statewide reform" concept, on which H.R. 3320 is largely based, plus a summary of the bill, and a discussion of selected issues related to this legislation and certain alternatives to it. Advocates of systemic statewide reform argue that it is important to improve and coordinate all major aspects of a state or local education system simultaneously in order for reforms to be effective. In contrast, opponents of H.R. 3320 may argue that it is too poorly targeted or its authorized funding level too low to have substantial impact, or that it would leave reform programs largely under the control of the same authorities who have been responsible for current school systems and attendant problems. Other issues that might be raised with respect to H.R. 3320 include: (1) Are the proposed forms of private school involvement appropriate? and (2) Is there adequate attention to the role of school finance equalization in statewide school reform? (16 references) (MLF)

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The Neighborhood Schools Improvement Act, H.R. 3320: Summary and Analysis

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October 31, 1991

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THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT ACT, H.R. 3320: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

SUMMARY

H.R. 3320, the Neighborhood Schools Improvement Act, was ordered to be reported by the House Committee on Education and Labor on October 17, 1991. This bill would authorize Federal support for elementary and secondary education **"systemic statewide reform"** programs over a 10-year period.

States wishing to receive grants under H.R. 3320 would establish broadly representative panels to develop comprehensive school reform programs. These reform programs would be required to incorporate ambitious educational **goals** for all pupils, as well as develop **curricular frameworks, instructional materials, assessment systems, professional development strategies, and evaluation plans** to meet the goals.

Beginning with the second year of the program, at least 75 percent of each State's funds would be distributed to local educational agencies (LEAs) to implement comprehensive local school reform programs, including at least one grant to an LEA within each congressional district, and one to the LEA in each State with the largest number of disadvantaged children. LEAs could use the funds for a variety of activities, including some proposed by the Bush Administration in its *AMERICA 2000* legislation. States would be required to report annually on their progress in developing and implementing reform plans, and biennially on their **school finance** programs. The school finance data would form the basis for a legislatively mandated study by the National Academy of Sciences of the equity of State school finance systems.

Advocates of systemic statewide reform argue that it is important to improve and coordinate all major aspects of a State or local education system simultaneously in order for reforms to be effective. They believe that although the emphasis of current Federal education programs on specific types of pupils, subjects, or educational techniques is appropriate and useful, there is now a need to focus on improving the effectiveness of State education **systems**. In contrast, opponents of H.R. 3320 may argue that it is too poorly targeted or its authorized funding level too low to have substantial impact, that a focus on making "radical" changes to individual schools would be more effective, or that it would leave State and local reform programs largely under the control of the same authorities--e.g., State and local school boards and superintendents--who have been responsible for current school systems and attendant problems.

Other issues that might be raised with respect to H.R. 3320 include: Are the proposed forms of private school involvement appropriate? Is there adequate attention to the role of school finance equalization in statewide school reform?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

THE STATEWIDE SYSTEMIC REFORM CONCEPT 1

CURRENT STATE ACTIVITIES 2

SUMMARY OF H.R. 3320 2
- State Plans 3
- Local Plans 3
- Local Uses of Funds 4
- Authorizations and Allocations 4
- Private Schools 5
- School Finance and Other Reports and Studies 6

MAJOR ISSUES 7
- Different Reform Strategies 7
- Appropriate Federal Role 8
- Role of Current Public Education Authorities 9
- Roles for Private Education 10
- School Finance Equalization 11

THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT ACT, H.R. 3320: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

H.R. 3320, the Neighborhood Schools Improvement Act, was ordered to be reported by the House Committee on Education and Labor on October 17, 1991. H.R. 3320 would support comprehensive elementary and secondary school reform programs at the State and local levels. This report provides an introduction to the "systemic statewide reform" concept, on which H.R. 3320 is largely based, plus a summary of the bill, as reported by the Education and Labor Committee, and a discussion of selected issues related to this legislation and certain alternatives to it.

THE STATEWIDE SYSTEMIC REFORM CONCEPT

H.R. 3320 would authorize Federal support for "systemic statewide reform" programs over a 10-year period. According to its proponents, the systemic statewide reform concept encompasses five key elements,[1] each of which should be pursued as close to simultaneously as possible--at least with respect to a particular subject or level of education--in order to be effective. The primary elements of systemic statewide reform are:

- establishment of ambitious educational goals and expectations that apply to all children;
- development of curricular frameworks--descriptions of the knowledge and skills pupils should acquire at each grade level in a particular subject area--that are based on the goals;
- identification or development, and use, of high quality curricular materials that are based on the curricular frameworks;
- creation and implementation of pupil assessment systems that are directly based on the curricular frameworks, employ a variety of techniques and measures, and are fair, reliable, and valid; and
- institution of professional development programs to enable teachers, administrators, and other school staff to understand the curriculum and the best ways of instructing pupils in it.

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[1]For further information, see Smith, Marshall S. and Jennifer O'Day. *Systemic School Reform*, In Fuhrman, Susan H. and Betty Malen, eds. *The Politics of Curriculum and Testing*, 1991. p. 233-267.

In addition to these five basic elements, there are certain important implications of the systemic statewide reform concept. First, because the emphasis in educational governance and accountability shifts to goals, curricular frameworks, and outcome assessments, there should be less regulation of educational processes or methods. Professional educators at the school level would be given guidance on the broad outlines of what they should teach and how pupil performance will be assessed, but then given flexibility to determine how best to meet those challenges. Second, because all schools will need adequate resources to implement challenging curricula, many States will need to consider whether their finance systems provide sufficiently equitable resources among schools and local educational agencies. Finally, the systemic statewide reform concept is seen by many of its proponents as being compatible with the provision of financial or other rewards for schools that are successful in meeting State goals or improving their performance, and technical assistance, followed if necessary by sanctions, for schools that fail to do so.

CURRENT STATE ACTIVITIES

States are currently undertaking many reforms that are a part of statewide systemic reform, although few are implementing the full range of reforms envisioned in this systemic reform effort. Kentucky is an example of a State that is moving forward in a comprehensive fashion, having been required under a State Supreme Court decision to restructure its entire educational system. Among the reform actions the State has underway are: setting goals for student performance; basing incentives and sanctions on achievement of these goals; exploring new ways of assessing student achievement; developing curricular frameworks; requiring each school district to engage in site-based management; and strengthening professional development for the teaching force.

Other States are relatively far along in some aspects of this effort. California is shaping new curricular frameworks that are guiding new approaches to student assessment and textbook adoption, as well as professional development. Connecticut is linking a statewide common core of learning to new assessment procedures. Vermont has set goals for its schools as well as a new school accountability process, and is implementing non-traditional student assessment practices. Arkansas is also finding new ways of assessing achievement, in addition to agreeing upon learning objectives for its instructional program, and tying licensing of teachers and administrators to educational outcomes.

SUMMARY OF H.R. 3320

States that receive grants under H.R. 3320 would establish a panel to develop a statewide school reform plan. The State panel would include the Governor, presiding officers and minority leaders of the State legislature, the chief State school officer (State superintendent or equivalent), the head of the State higher education agency, plus representatives of teachers, school administrators, local school boards, parents, businesses, students, the State school board, and of the LEAs in the State with lowest spending levels per pupil.

The panel may name additional members, up to a total of 25. The first meeting of the panel would be convened by the chief State school officer, but the panel would select its own chairperson.

State Plans

The State plan would include the five elements of the systemic statewide reform described above--goals, curricular frameworks, instructional materials, assessment, and professional development. The plan would also provide for: the allocation of resources to implement the reforms, including grants to LEAs; a process for reviewing local, State, and Federal laws and regulations that might hinder systemic reform; evaluation of the plan's effects, using objective measures; a review of expenditure disparities among LEAs under the State's school finance program; the provision of materials and services in a nondiscriminatory manner; and dissemination of successful practices to all LEAs in the State. The plan would: focus on outcome measures rather than prescribe procedures to be followed by LEAs; take into account similar developments in other States and at the national level; build upon the services available through other Federal assistance programs; and ensure broad public participation in the development of the plan. After it is developed by the panel, the plan would be submitted to the State education agency (SEA); no change may be made to the plan without the concurrence of the panel. The SEA would then submit the plan to the U.S. Secretary of Education.

Local Plans

Beginning with the second year that a State receives a grant under H.R. 3320, at least 75 percent of the grant would be allocated by the State to LEAs. LEAs receiving such grants would include the LEA in the State with the largest number of disadvantaged children, plus at least one LEA in each congressional district. LEAs receiving grants would develop local districtwide reform plans, through local committees, that are analogous to the State plans and panels. The local committee would include the chief elected officer of the local unit of general government (city, county, town, etc.) that is most closely associated with the LEA, the LEA's superintendent, representatives of the school board, teacher association, business association, parents of children served by the chapter 1 program,[2] and students. As with the State panel, the initial group might name additional members, up to a total of 25. The local superintendent would convene the committee initially, but the committee could select its own chairperson.

The local systemic reform plan would be primarily an adaptation of the State plan to local circumstances, with the additional requirements that it must include a review of the administrative and staffing structure of the LEA, and provide for the use of funds at the individual school level to the maximum

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[2]Chapter 1, title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides assistance for the education of disadvantaged children living in relatively low income areas.

possible extent. SEAs might provide technical assistance to LEAs in plan development. The local committee would submit its plan to the local school board for approval.

Local Uses of Funds

A variety of activities could be funded under the local plan. Several are specified, but this list is **not** exclusive--services other than those listed might be provided under this program. Three of the specified activities are similar to proposals in the Bush Administration's *AMERICA 2000* legislation.[3] These are *New American Schools*, described as schools that "reflect the best available knowledge regarding teaching and learning for all students;" merit school grants to schools with improved performance; and school choice programs, "consistent with State law and State constitutions." Other activities specified for local use of funds include: plan development and implementation; site-based management, under which substantial decision making authority is shifted to the staff, and sometimes also the parents, of individual schools; parental involvement activities; coordination of health and social services with education; awards to enhance student motivation; planning for use of instructional technology in schools; professional development; identification or development of curricular materials; replication of successful education programs; and technical assistance to individual schools.

Authorizations and Allocations

The appropriations authorization for H.R. 3320 would be $700 million for fiscal year (FY) 1992, and "such sums as may be necessary" for each of FY 1993-2002. Both the 10-year authorization period, and a renewable 5-year cycle for grants to States, are unusually long for Federal education assistance programs. The apparent intent is to assure a relatively long term, stable source of support for State reform programs that will presumably require several years to develop and implement.

Appropriations would be allocated to the States according to the formulas of part A, chapter 1, title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Thus, grants would be made primarily in proportion to the distribution of school age (5-17 years) children from poor families, partially adjusted by a "cost factor" of the State average per pupil expenditure for public elementary and secondary education.[4] There is no statutory formula for determining the

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[3]For a discussion of the *AMERICA 2000* strategy and legislation, see U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. *National Education Goals: Federal Policy Issues*. Issue Brief No. IB91077, by Wayne Riddle, James Stedman, and Paul Irwin, Oct. 18, 1991, (updated regularly). Washington, 1991. (Hereafter cited as U.S. Library of Congress, *National Education Goals*)

[4]Under the chapter 1, part A formulas, grants are made on the basis of counts of certain children, multiplied by a State cost factor. The children (continued...)

specific amount of sub-state allocations in H.R. 3320. No more that 4 percent of each grant, or $250,000, whichever is greater, could be used for State administration. Beginning with the second year they receive grants, States would be required to match the Federal allocations.[5] The required State share of total program costs would rise from 15 percent for such second program year, to 67 percent for the fifth and succeeding years. The State share of program funds could be provided in cash or in kind, and might include contributions from the private sector. In order to continue to receive grants, States would be required to maintain their spending for public elementary and secondary education at 90 percent or more of the previous year level. One-half percent of appropriations, up to $2 million, would be reserved for programs in schools for Native American pupils operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Private Schools

States and LEAs receiving grants under H.R. 3320 would be required to make available to private schools information about the goals, curricular frameworks, instructional materials, and assessments developed under the program. Grantees would also be required to allow teachers and administrators of private schools to participate in professional development programs conducted as part of State or local plans. If grantees were unable or unwilling to provide such assistance to private schools and staff, Department of Education (ED) would arrange directly for such provision. Finally, as noted earlier, among the explicitly authorized local uses of funds would be school choice programs, "consistent with State law and State constitutions." It is possible that in some

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[4](...continued)
counted in the formulas are children aged 5-17 years: in poor families, according to the latest decennial Census; in families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payments in excess of the poverty level for a family of four; and in certain institutions for the neglected and delinquent. In recent years, fewer than 5 percent of the children counted in the formula have been from the second and third categories. The cost factor is the State average per pupil expenditure for public elementary and secondary education, constrained within limits of 80 and 120 percent of the national average.

Ninety percent of chapter 1, part A funds are allocated under a basic grant formula, and the remaining 10 percent under a concentration grant formula. For basic grants, all formula children are considered, and an LEA need have only 10 such children in order to receive a grant. For concentration grants, only LEAs in counties with at least 6,500 formula children, or in which such children make up 15 percent or more of the total population aged 5-17, are eligible.

[5]The matching requirement does not apply to the outlying areas--i.e., the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and (until adoption of its Compact of Free Association) Palau.

States or localities, such choice programs might include private schools as an option under limited circumstances.[6]

School Finance and Other Reports and Studies

Finally, H.R. 3320 would mandate a number of reports and studies. First, participating States would submit to the U.S. Secretary of Education an annual report on their progress in implementing their plan, their proposed activities for the succeeding year, and Federal regulations that the State or its LEAs believe may hinder systemic reform. A report based on these State reports would be submitted each year by the Secretary to the House Committee on Education and Labor and the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources. Second, the Secretary would conduct an evaluation of reform plans assisted under H.R. 3320 in a representative sample of States and LEAs.

H.R. 3320 would further require participating States to submit data on their school finance systems. This biennial data collection would include a description of all State school finance programs, and related data for each of the State's LEAs--total expenditures, sources of revenue, local tax rates, educational services offered, pupil population, ability to raise local revenues, and costs of providing educational services. These data would be reviewed, and where necessary adjusted, by the National Center for Education Statistics, and technical assistance would be provided to the States in the preparation and reporting of the data. The data would also to be submitted to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), with which the Secretary would be required to contract for a study of the financial disparities among LEAs under the State school finance programs. The NAS report on the findings of this study would be submitted within 3 years of the initial allocation of funds under H.R. 3320. As part of the study, NAS would develop model State school finance programs, applying generally accepted concepts of equalization, and ED would provide technical assistance to States wishing to implement these models.

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[6]Currently, there are extremely few cases where publicly funded school choice programs involve private schools. The primary examples are Wisconsin--where up to 1,000 children in Milwaukee from poor families may attend certain private schools with their per capita share of State aid funds going to the school--and Vermont--where high school students living in LEAs without a public school may attend either certain private high schools, or public high schools in other LEAs, at public expense. In these two cases, only non-sectarian private schools may participate. There are also isolated cases where public funds are used to pay private school elementary and secondary education tuition for selected pupils with very specific educational needs, primarily certain disabled pupils or school dropouts.

MAJOR ISSUES

Different Reform Strategies

The debate in the 102d Congress over H.R. 3320, *AMERICA 2000*, and other related proposals has involved, in part, discussion of the merits of different education reform strategies. This discussion has centered on the following questions: Does lasting educational reform require that change be pursued on a systemwide basis at the State and local level? Or, can innovative models successfully spark and shape broad-based educational reform? These two questions can be explored by considering the different approaches of H.R. 3320 and *AMERICA 2000*.

H.R. 3320 reflects the belief that a systemic approach to educational reform is needed. To receive Federal support under this program, States and localities must engage in a structured reform process, involving, among other actions, goal setting, assessment, curricular reform, and teacher development. In its findings, the bill states, "[S]trategies must be developed by States and communities to support the revitalization of all local schools by fundamentally changing the entire system of education through comprehensive, coherent, and coordinated improvement."[7] It further concludes that previous reforms have not had a systemwide approach, and so have affected only a few schools or discrete parts of the education system. The systemic reform approach is currently an aspect of numerous current State level reform initiatives.[8]

In contrast, *AMERICA 2000* seeks to accomplish a substantial portion of its educational reform through the creation of model or "lighthouse" centers of innovation, both at the community level with *AMERICA 2000* communities, and at the school level within those communities through *New American Schools*.[9] *AMERICA 2000* communities would have to adopt the six national education goals,[10] design ways of achieving them, develop report cards on progress toward the goals, and agree on creating and supporting *New American Schools*. The latter have been characterized as "break the mold" schools, using innovative and effective approaches to educating students. Federal funds are to support at least one of these schools per congressional district. According to U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander, "We think of the school as the unit, the focus of

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[7]Section 8002(4) of the ESEA, as it would be amended by H.R. 3320.

[8]See, for example, National Governors' Association. *From Rhetoric to Action: State Progress in Restructuring the Education System*, Washington, 1991.

[9]For a detailed description of the elements of *AMERICA 2000*, see U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. *AMERICA 2000: The President's Education Strategy*. CRS Report for Congress No. 91-430 EPW, by James B. Stedman. Washington, 1991.

[10]For a discussion of the *AMERICA 2000* strategy and legislation, see U.S. Library of Congress, *National Education Goals*.

our strategy. If we try to fix whole states or fix whole systems, we'll fail. I think you have to fix whole schools and let groups of those schools then become a system."[11]

The dichotomy between the two proposals is not as clear cut as some of the debate over these two legislative proposals would have it. Many of the reform actions called for by *AMERICA 2000* are similar to those delineated in H.R. 3320, such as assessment of progress toward goals, development of curricular standards, and professional development, but these are to occur at the national level, rather than the State or local level. Nevertheless, the capacity of national reform efforts, such as those proposed in *AMERICA 2000*, to effect necessary changes at the State and local levels remains open to question.

Appropriate Federal Role

The debate over H.R. 3320 and the other related proposals has involved, in part, discussion of the appropriate Federal role in this era of educational reform. One of the key issues is whether new Federal assistance should be targeted on reforms that might affect all children or on the needs of particular groups of children, principally those who are educationally or economically disadvantaged.[12]

H.R. 3320 has triggered this debate partly because, in contrast to most current Federal elementary and secondary education programs, it is **not** focused on a relatively narrowly defined area of need, such as specific types of pupils, services, educational techniques, or subject areas. It attempts to improve the coherence and effectiveness of State education systems as a whole.

Proponents observe that steps toward systemic statewide reform are likely to help make current State reforms and Federal programs more effective by integrating them into a more coherent, comprehensive strategy. The assistance provided by the legislation would be predicated upon development of a systemic reform approach, and continued assistance for States or localities would require evidence of progress for **all** children. As a result, the specific needs of different kinds of students would be met. Proponents note, as well, that H.R. 3320, with its substantial matching requirements, would leverage funding for school reform that greatly exceeds the direct Federal investment. Further, the legislation may reflect a concern that, as States and localities engage in systemic reform and become increasingly focused on outcomes rather than process, the structures and

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[11]As quoted in "Bush's Choice," by Edward B. Fiske (*Agenda*, fall 1991).

[12]For a variety of positions on this and related issues, see, William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, and the Institute for Educational Leadership. *Voices from the Field: 30 Expert Opinions on America 2000, The Bush Administration Strategy To "Reinvent" America's Schools*. Washington, 1991; and testimony presented during "Oversight Hearing on System-Wide Education Reform" held September 17, 1991, by the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education.

provisions of current Federal education assistance programs may need to be reconsidered. Finally, it is argued that a focus on the linkages, relationships, and often unintended consequences of various agencies and policies within State and local school systems may now be the primary unmet need in Federal and State education assistance legislation.

In contrast, some have posited that a substantial expansion of current Federal programs would be the most appropriate Federal response because these programs focus on the student populations that were least likely to have benefitted from previous reform efforts. Without directing assistance to those populations and identifying the actions to be taken on their behalf, some fear that the needs of special populations of students will not be met.[13] In addition, it has been questioned whether H.R. 3320, as presently structured, will actually promote statewide systemic reform. Critics have argued that, with its reliance on panels and committees that include the current leaders of State and local governments, legislatures, and school systems, and its relative lack of focus on specific pupils, geographic areas, or educational techniques, the legislation will not have any significant impact.[14] According to these observers, States might incorporate H.R. 3320's funds and requirements into existing, limited school "reform" programs without much perceptible change. As a result, any Federal funds provided under the legislation, it is asserted, would constitute essentially general aid to the States and localities.

Role of Current Public Education Authorities

H.R. 3320 seeks to engage State and local educational agencies in systemic reform activity. At issue has been the extent to which State and local educational authorities will dominate this effort. Critics have charged that the State and local educational bureaucracies have proven unable to accomplish improvement in educational performance, and may be partly responsible for declining performance. They argue that only persons outside the current "education establishment" are likely to initiate the needed degree of innovation and reform. Proponents counter that without the direct and sustained involvement of educational authorities, little meaningful reform will be possible. The bill, it is suggested, offers an opportunity to focus State and local educational officials on reform that will require change from the *status quo*.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, under H.R. 3320, State and local educational authorities will have a substantial level of influence and control over the direction and nature of the reforms undertaken. Although the State and local plans are to be developed by panels whose membership will be broadly representative of most groups involved and interested in elementary and

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[13]Examples of current bills that incorporate the strategy of increasing funding for current Federal education programs and/or providing assistance to targeted areas or subjects include H.R. 3548, introduced by Rep. Mink, *et al.*, and H.R. 1669, introduced by former Rep. Gray, *et al.*

[14]This issue is discussed further in the following section.

secondary education, the chief State school officer will convene the first meeting of the State panel and the local school superintendent will convene the first meeting of each local panel. Many of the required members of the State and local panels will be public education officials. Further, the State plan must be approved by the State educational agency and each local plan must be approved by the appropriate local school board.

A related issue concerns the role of the State Governor in this process. Some critics have called for a stronger gubernatorial influence on the panels and plans. They argue that this would mirror what is actually happening in States, as much of the reform currently underway appears to be the product of action taken by Governors, sometimes in the face of opposition by State educational agencies and others. In response, it is argued that the officials most directly responsible for education should take the lead. Nevertheless, it is noted the Governors will have a role to play as members of the State panels, and, further, that in many States the legal relationship between the Governor and the chief State school officer may lead to significant gubernatorial influence.[15]

Roles for Private Education

Debate over the role of private schools in H.R. 3320 has focused on two issues--the school choice authority, and services to be provided to private schools or staff. As noted earlier, H.R. 3320 specifically authorizes local grantees to use funds under the bill for school choice programs to the extent allowed in State law or constitutions. Some have argued that this could lead to Federal grants being used to support choice programs involving private and public schools, and an amendment to limit such choice programs to public schools was extensively debated, but not adopted, by the House Education and Labor Committee. Currently, publicly supported school choice programs that involve private schools are extremely limited. Further, given the membership specified for the State panels and local committees in the bill, it appears unlikely that many of them would propose using program funds to support private schools. There may be a few States that directly and explicitly prohibit such programs.

The services that grantees are required to provide to private schools and staff are limited to information about the goals, curricular frameworks, instructional materials, and assessments, plus inclusion of private school staff in professional development services. This degree of private school participation is more limited than in some other Federal elementary and secondary education programs. However, it would be difficult to fashion a broader private school role in a program focused on improving the public school **system**, as opposed to more traditional Federal education assistance programs such as those focused on particular types of pupils with special needs.

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[15]In many States, the Governor appoints the chief State school officer, or appoints a State school board that, in turn, selects the chief.

School Finance Equalization

As noted earlier, advocates of systemic statewide reform argue that the provision of more equal expenditures among a State's LEAs is an implication or a requirement of the concept, because of the emphasis on having **all** pupils meet challenging educational goals.[16] H.R. 3320 addresses this issue through its requirements for collection of data on the school finance programs of participating States, for a National Academy of Sciences study of State school finance programs, and for technical assistance to the States in these areas.

Some may be concerned that the data collection requirement may be burdensome for States, especially to the extent that new finance data surveys might be required or existing ones significantly modified. Also, some of the data--especially that on the costs of providing educational services, the condition of facilities, and the ability of LEAs to raise revenues--may be available only in a "crude" form, if at all, for LEAs in many States. Nevertheless, most of the requested data are already collected by the States for their own purposes. Further, the National Center for Education Statistics is implementing plans to collect much of these finance data for all LEAs in the future, in cooperation with the U.S. Census Bureau's school district survey. Some of the other data, such as that on pupil demographic characteristics, may be collected in the future under other ED surveys. Thus, assuming that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) avoids unnecessarily duplicating existing or planned surveys, the net additional data collection requirements are likely to be manageable, except in areas, especially the three mentioned earlier in this paragraph, where further development of relevant concepts and data collection methods may be necessary before useful data are obtainable from all States. In these areas, NCES and the States might possibly respond to the requirement in H.R. 3320 by clarifying this situation.

In contrast to concerns about data collection burden, advocates of a more active Federal role in school finance equalization may find the H.R. 3320 provisions to be too "weak," preferring to require that participating States meet some form of equalization standard. However, opponents of such a requirement might argue that more research and data collection are needed, in order to determine the current status of the States and develop definitions of what "school finance equalization" means, before such a requirement should be considered. It might be further argued that the scope of such a requirement, affecting all State and local funds for public elementary and secondary education, is inappropriate to the relatively limited--compared to the many billions of dollars that States contribute to their school finance programs--amount of Federal funds that this bill, or even all Federal education assistance funds, might provide.

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[16]For additional information on State school finance programs and issues related to local disparities under those programs, see U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. *Expenditures in Public School Districts: Why Do They Differ?* CRS Report for Congress No. 90-322 EPW, by Wayne Clifton Riddle. Washington, 1990.